

The Living, Eternal Word of God

Scripture Reading: John 6:66-69

“From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked with Him no more. Then said Jesus to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”

After Christ’s resurrection, Jesus made many appearances to His disciples. He gave them His presence. He gave them His provision. He gave them His protection. As the Jews had different rabbinical schools, so Jesus schooled His disciples in a progressive way. The three major rabbinical schools were...

- The School of Shammai – This was like getting a bachelor’s degree. The basics were taught.
- The School of Hillel – This was advanced teaching.
- The School of Gamaliel - Gamaliel was at the School of Hillel, but very few were allowed to sit directly under his teaching. His was the highest level of education.

Jesus gave His basic teaching about salvation for about three and a half years. Then He sealed it with His death on the cross, purchasing that salvation (I John 1:1-10). We compare this to the School of Shammai.

Then Jesus rose from the dead and gave forty days (Acts 1:3) of Schooling, preparing them to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). This is like the School of Hillel.

Now, for around two thousand years, Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, educating us, preparing us to meet God the Father (John 14:6; I Peter 3:18; I Corinthians 1:4-8; 15:20-28). We compare this to the School of Gamaliel.

We have two heroes in the Book of Acts:

- Peter, in Acts chapters one through twelve.
- Paul, in Acts chapters 13 through twenty-eight.

The work of the apostles was to preach the gospel and establish churches. Then letters were written to help and strengthen the churches, so that they could continue in the power and in the light of God's eternal word. It is this pattern of ministry that I have tried to follow in India. With the help of the Lord, we have established thirteen churches in India. Rather than let the churches grow too large, we multiply them when they get over 100 people.

In II Corinthians 3:1-3, Paul says that the believers in Christ are living epistles, that others can read. Through the ministry of the gospel, God's Spirit has written, not on tables of stone, as He did with Moses. Rather, God's Spirit has written on the hearts of His people. Think about God's finger writing on the tables of stone, before Moses. That did not take long! But God kept Moses up in the mountain for forty days to make a powerful impression on Moses, so he could be a teacher to the people of Israel. Let's think about how God wants to teach us.

In Matthew 15:11-32, we learn of a prodigal son who repented and returned to his father. The father received his son back, but wanted the older son to also join him in receiving his brother. The custom was that a father would place a younger son next to him with the older son sitting on the other side. This way the young son was taught the things of God, with the father on one side of him and his brother on the other side of him. In Ephesians 2:1-7, we are told that when we are saved (born again) we are made to sit in heavenly places in Christ. Jesus Christ died on the cross, paid for our sins, then rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. A careful study of Acts 2:25-35 and Psalm 16:8-11 will show that David sees himself with Messiah / Christ on his right side. In turn, Christ is seated with the Father at His right side. This puts David (and all true believers) seated between both the Father and the Son (consider John 10:27-30). If we have God the Father on one side of us, and the Son of God on the other side of us, and the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, what a safe place we have! What a position we are in to be taught of God and used of God!

Think of the time God takes to work with us. It only took a few weeks to get Israel out of Egypt. But it took forty years for God to get Egypt out of the hearts of Israel! God wants to write His eternal word in our hearts. Then we become the living word of God for others to hear and see. God used His finger to defeat Pharaoh and his magicians (Exodus 8:19). As God used His finger to write on the tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18), so, Jesus cast out demons and demonstrated God's power and authority with ***"the finger of God"*** (Luke 11:20 cp. Matthew 12:28 ***"the Spirit of God"***). It is the finger of God / the Spirit of God that wants to write on your heart! He wants us to be living epistles / living letters for Jesus!

God's hand wrote on the mountain in the wilderness to give us the law. That law is described as *"the ministry of condemnation"* (II Corinthians 3:9). Again, God's hand wrote on the wall and declared condemnation to Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1-31). But Jesus twice wrote on the ground, with His finger, and gave forgiveness to the woman who was taken in adultery (John 8:1-11). What did He actually write? No one knows. But I will use my imagination and say that the first time Jesus wrote, He wrote, ***"The wages of sin is death."*** But the second time He wrote, He wrote ***"But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."***

See Romans 6:23 cp. Romans 8:1.